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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4836
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1009
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0034
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9781
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0245
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4242
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1701
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3429
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0429
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6878
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4494
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0826
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0829
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0524
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2765
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0407
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001012

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM KWMN KCRM PREL BM

SUBJECT: PROGRESS ON TRANSNATIONAL TIP SLOWING

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Classified By: Acting P/E Chief Mark B. Taylor; for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

1.(C) SUMMARY: The GOB,s efforts to address transnational TIP across Burma,s borders with China and Thailand appear to be stalling due to lack of high-level support for the efforts of field officials and the regime,s hardened attitude toward working with foreign organizations. The three or four Burmese anti-TIP interlocutors who worked regularly with the international community will b e retiring shortly. The regime,s cooperation with a bilateral Australian government project to assist the Burmese police anti-TIP unit has deteriorated over the past 14 months. Prospect for a stronger anti-TIP commitment are unlikely. END SUMMARY

2.(C) Recent meetings with international NGOs working on TIP issues in Burma, the UN Inter-Agency Program on Trafficking in the Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP), and the Australian government,s anti-TIP law enforcement trainer reveal that the GOB,s anti-TIP cooperation is limited and worsening. The government does not engage in any substantive dialogue with NGOs, though the UNIAP country representative has tried repeatedly to start such an exchange. The response has always been, &We are not ready.8 Efforts by the two main international NGOs, Save the Children and World Vision, to successfully repatriate and reintegrate Burmese TIP victims after government-to-government border exchanges have also floundered due to lack of GOB cooperation. Both NGOs report that victims returned from Thailand and China are not always referred to them, but are let go without support or handed over to government proxy organizations, such as the Myanmar Women,s Affairs Federation.

THE BURMAN WAY TO &REFORM8 TIP VICTIMS

3.(C) Both NGOs and UNIAP express concern over the GOB's lack of consultation with NGOs or UN organizations in designing and implementing its mandatory one-month &training8 course for repatriated Thai victims. This course, which the GOB started in 2005 through a center in Rangoon and now also conducts through smaller centers in Kengtung and Mandalay, purportedly provides victims with counseling and vocational training.

4.(C) World Vision and Save the Children representatives are able to participate in small segments of the training, but criticize the fact that it is done en masse, with no individual counseling, and only in Burmese, despite the fact that many victims are from ethnic minority groups and do not speak Burmese. Most of the training is done by Burmans who have little experience on trafficking issues or conditions in Burma's ethnic belt from which many victims originate. Victims at the Rangoon center are given weekend tours of the government's museums and other symbols of &Myanmar national pride8 by the MWAF and USDA. Observers note that conditions at the compulsory training centers are not good. &After staying in Baan Kredtakarn (the Thai government's main shelter for foreign TIP victims), these victims are not at all happy in the Rangoon training center,⁸ noted one NGO worker.

AUSTRALIAN PROJECT ON THE ROCKS

5.(C) A July 18 meeting with departing Australian police trainer David Savage found him discouraged about his 14-month stint in Burma. Savage, a contractor of the Australian government's regional anti-TIP project &Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking8 (ARCPPT), said he

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has seen little political commitment from the regime in fighting TIP, with only three or four mid-level officers showing any serious commitment. His assignment to Burma was intended as bilateral anti-TIP assistance to help train and advise the new Police anti-TIP unit. He has yet to received the level of cooperation called for in the project's design. He had expected to work in Police Headquarters alongside the officers he was to train, per the project agreement. Instead, he found himself placed exiled in an annex far from the headquarters and was seldom allowed to participate in any anti-TIP operations.

6.(C) In his 14 months, he was only allowed to make four trips outside of Rangoon, with eight others denied or postponed indefinitely. Repeating GOB claims of three-officer anti-TIP units established in nine &hot-spots8 around the country, including Kengtung and Tachilek in the eastern Shan State, Savage noted that he had never been able to visit any of these. P/E officer, who visited both Shan towns in mid-July, told Savage that no local observers, including the World Vision anti-trafficking staff in Tachilek, could attest to the existence of these &hot spot8 units.

7.(C) Police officers nominated by the Home Minister for training as part of the new anti-TIP unit are often inexperienced, requiring the most basic investigative training. Some are even clerks and librarians with no law enforcement experience, Savage said. Every attempt he makes to hold an anti-TIP workshop for police outside of Rangoon requires the approval of the Home Minister, who personally makes all decisions, and often in a time-delaying and capricious style. Most recently, Savage could not get the Home Minister to allow lower-ranking police officials to meet with an AUSAID delegation visiting Burma to assess the effectiveness of the ARCPPT training project. When Savage has asked to send trained anti-TIP officers to workshops or advanced training outside the country, he was given a list of

officers from outside the TIP unit, with no experience and no English skills, so he and ARCPPT managers repeatedly refused to sponsor these officials, participation.

8.(C) The regime,s move to Nay Pyi Daw has only exacerbated the problems of accessing the three or four anti-TIP interlocutors, the Australian trainer noted. Now weeks go by without any communication, much less a meeting. Moreover, all of these senior police officers, who speak English and have received training outside of Burma, plan to retire within the next year. The next generation of officers to command the anti-transnational crime department (containing the anti-TIP unit) may not speak English well or have overseas experience, further diminishing prospects for effective cooperation. Savage, who departs Burma soon, said that he would be replaced by a new police trainer/advisor in August, but added that a decision to continue or abandon the project will be made shortly thereafter. He felt that the project will likely shut down.

SUSPECT ANTI-TIP DATA AND HANDICAPPED LAW

9.(C) The 426 trafficking prosecutions reported by the government for calendar year 2005 and cited in the 2006 TIP Report are most likely an amalgam of true trafficking prosecutions and a far greater number of people involved in other smuggling crimes, ARCPPT,s David Savage and UNIAP,s country representative, Ei Kalya Moore, told us in separate meetings. Given the lack of transparency in the government,s reporting, it is impossible to obtain more

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details on individual cases from Home Affairs Ministry personnel.

10.(C) Similarly, noted Savage, it is impossible to monitor the government,s purported prosecutions, since these are military tribunals inaccessible to outsiders. Repeated requests to the Home Ministry for further details of particular court cases have produced no response, he stated. None of the international anti-TIP organizations in Burma are able to cite the number of prosecutions pursued under the regime,s September 2005 anti-TIP law. Though the law covers all forms of trafficking and carries appropriate penalties, most observers believe the law will not be effectively implemented, given the lack of outside access to judicial personnel and the courts, lack of independence. Highlighting this at a UNIAP-organized national seminar on the new law in March 2006, a retired Supreme Court justice stressed that the law can be implemented effectively only through an independent judiciary.

THE TIP REPORT FACTOR

11.(C) A July 18 public discussion on TIP issues held at the American Center aired views by STC and World Vision anti-trafficking program officers on best practices needed for victim identification and protection. Both NGOs pointed to the modest progress made in the government-to-to-government repatriation of Burmese victims from Thailand, assisted by the two NGOs. They highlighted the need for a &rights-based& or &victim-centered& approach to victim care.

12.(C) The NGO speakers offered soft criticism of the Department,s TIP Report as they claimed that the Report inhibits cooperation from the committed mid-level GOB officials in the field and reflects a gap between a political and operational levels of government that address trafficking. In an aside with Acting P/E Chief, World Vision project coordinator Dr. Saw Ivan said that some Home Ministry officials appreciated the modest credit given to the GOB in the 2005 TIP Report,s Burma narrative, though the prevailing mood among ministry officials was that the Tier 3 ranking

would not elicit greater political support among the regime generals for anti-TIP reform.

13.(C) COMMENT: Burma's modest anti-trafficking progress in addressing transnational TIP issues now appears primarily to have been the product of a few senior police officers, initiative and outside funding, rather than a reflection of a genuine commitment by SPDC leadership. The regime's refusal to cooperate effectively with the Australian bilateral assistance project shows that even efforts that carry no political strings cannot overcome the SPDC's isolation and paranoia. END COMMENT

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